

VZCZCXRO8089
PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #4231 3181026
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 141026Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7996
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004231

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/13/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECPS](#) [KPAO](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT TIKRIT: GOI CENSURES TV STATION IN SALAH AD DIN

Classified By: Classified by Stephanie Miley, PRT Team Leader, for reasons
1.5 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din cable.

12. (C) SUMMARY. Following the November 5 verdict announcement in the first Saddam Hussein trial, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) at the direction of the Prime Minister directed Salah ad Din (SaD) Governor Hamad Hamoud al Shakti to close the Coalition Forces-funded Salah ad Din TV (SDTV) because it was inciting violence by airing inflammatory statements made during a call-in program about the Saddam verdict. The Governor immediately closed the station, which will likely re-open on November 14 or 15. The station's forced closure was a step backwards in the province's relationship with the central government. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) According to Governor Hamad, the Minister of Interior (MoI) ordered the station closed because statements made during a call-in program after the announcement of the Saddam verdict were inciting violence and were derogatory about GOI Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki. Reportedly, the MoI demanded the arrest of the station's director and other employers under the Anti-Terrorism Law. Governor Hamad, however, told the MoI that he would handle the matter internally in SaD. He then ordered the station's closure per the MoI's order. The Governor later told station employees that no one would be arrested and advised them of their journalistic and professional responsibilities.

14. (C) Provincial Council (PC) Chair Sheikh Rasheed Ossman and several other PC members said that the station's closure was "a barbeque on a symbolic fire" and that the MoI used the Saddam verdict as an excuse to close the station. Station managers have told us, and other reports indicate, that SaD residents were angry about the station's closure, as they felt the censure specifically targeted Sunnis and limited their freedom to express their opinions. They noted that no stations in Shia areas, which many believe were inciting sectarian violence, were closed.

Comment

15. (C) The closure of the SaD TV station has clearly strained the province's relationship with the central government. It has also exacerbated the sense among many SaD Sunnis' that the "Shia-dominated" central government is not truly interested in national reconciliation or in including Sunnis in the political process. Re-opening the station will likely relieve the immediate tensions, but nonetheless the closure adds to the list of grievances many

SaD Sunni have with the central government and, for the time being, serves as a symbol of their believed marginalization. END COMMENT.

[16](#). (U) For additional reporting from PRT Tikrit, Salah ad Din, please see our SIPRNET Reporting Blog:
<http://blogs.csp.sgov.gov/blojsom/blog/salahaddin/>.
Speckhard